Heart of Darkness Analysis Essay

Henderson – English III H

**Objective**

In a thoroughly developed analysis essay, you will explore one of the prompts listed below and apply its concepts to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Your essay will need to establish the following: a clear stance in a cogently worded thesis statement; sound, detailed analysis of apt textual evidence; a dialectical incorporation of valid literary criticism.

**Requirements**

* 6 page minimum
* Typed (or if disaster strikes, handwritten neatly in ink)
* Adhere to MLA formatting guidelines
* Adhere to MLA citation guidelines
* Incorporate outside literary criticism, but be sure to rely on your own wits for the bulk of your argument and analysis. (Remember the 80/20 rule.)
* Literary device(s) must be clearly identified and analyzed in your essay!

**Prompt #1**

Consider the following excerpt. Then respond to the prompt below.

“Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn’t touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of somber pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror - - of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision - - he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath – “The horror! The horror!”

How does Kurtz’s cry of “the horror” relate to an underlying theme in the novel? Do more than just define “the horror”; consider its source, manifestation, and presentation in the novel.

**Prompt #2**

Explore the potential underlying meaning(s) of the novella’s title. If you examine multiple interpretations, be sure that your essay remains cohesive and organized.

**Prompt #3**

Discuss Conrad’s use of light and dark as a motif. How does his technique inform the overall meaning of the work?

**Prompt #4**

Consider the following summary of orientalism. Then respond to the prompt below.

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said defines the term as a Western, prejudiced

depiction of “Oriental” or Eastern art, culture, and thought. However, Said

argues, orientalism actually reveals more about European anxieties, attitudes, and

imperialism than it does about Eastern thought.

Where is there evidence of orientalism in *Heart of Darkness*? What attitudes toward “oriental” culture are depicted, and what aspects of Western thought are unintentionally revealed in the process?